

## CHAPTER XIX.

1858–63.

### OLD SCENES AND NEW.

WHILE Mr. Burns was thus laboriously preparing the way for future labourers in the comparatively hard and unkindly soil around Swatow, his missionary brethren had been reaping a rich and almost continuous harvest at the parent station of Amoy. His young colleague, Mr. Douglas, had entered on his work at a most auspicious moment, and had abundantly shared in that blessing which for the last three years had so signally rested on that favoured field, and on all connected with it. The number of converts and of inquirers in connection with all the societies increased rapidly; the zeal, love, and hopeful faith, alike of missionaries and of native disciples, deepened; and the Word of the Lord sounded out more and more widely over the whole region round. The valleys of the hill country, on the mainland to the west, had become in particular one wide and busy harvest-field of souls. The sacred fire, kindled the year before at a single spot, spread gradually, chiefly through the spontaneous zeal of converts and native evangelists, to the towns and villages around, and one living church after another rose up as lights amid the darkness. Speedily the daughter societies of Baypay and Chioh-bey rivalled alike in numbers and in fervour the mother congregation at Pechuia, while lesser groups of Christian worshippers were scattered here and there over the valleys and hills. In the absence of European labourers, or of trained native evangelists, the members of the infant churches themselves became the willing and zealous messengers of the Cross, and the Word of the Lord spread as by its own divine inherent might from village to village, and from heart to heart. Sometimes even it would be found that a single soul having heard the divine message, perhaps only once at some central mission station, had carried some living seeds of truth home to some sequestered village among the hills, and there alone, amid heathen idolaters, by feeble prayers to the true God, and rude endeavours to keep the Christian Sabbath, nursed the sacred germ, until some Christian evangelist came to water and to foster it. The aspect of the scene, as it presented itself to the young missionary on his first survey of the field, was thus exceedingly exhilarating. “A glorious work of God,” said he (Jan. 3, 1856), “has been wrought in this place, and He is working still, and by his dealings we seem warranted to expect that all this is but the merest beginning of the abundant blessing that he is about to bestow on this place and neighbourhood. For several years after this port was opened the labours seemed almost in vain, and when about seven years ago the drops began to fall, they

were very very few; but somewhat about two years ago, the conversions became more numerous, and now the number of living adult members is—London Missionary Society, here and at Ko-lang-soo, 150; American Mission here, 100; at Chioh-bey, 22; and our station at Pechuia, 25. Of these the London Society has 39 female members, and the Americans about the same number. You can now judge by what I have said as to the past and the present; while as to the future, our hopes rest, under the mercy and love of God, on various reasons,—partly the zeal and prayerfulness stirred up at home, partly on the singularly steady progress and continued proportional increase of the converting work, which is also peculiarly free from any excesses of enthusiasm or superstition; and very much on the fact that the converts, almost all, are full of zeal to lead their relatives and friends to become partakers of the like precious faith, and to instruct in the Scriptures and the doctrine those who are younger in Christ; they seem, so far as I can see, to delight to tell those who are still without, of the grace and peace which they have found.

“There are altogether fifteen native Christians employed as colporteurs and evangelists by the various missions; these assist in conducting the services in the chapels, and quite as often conduct them themselves; they also go out into the streets, and the neighbouring villages and towns, distributing tracts and Testaments, preaching and conversing with the people. Though of course I am not yet able to assist them in this work, I often accompany them. There are also several young men under training for this work by the several missionaries, who occasionally go out to help; and there are also several persons engaged in ordinary business, who delight to take part from time to time in these evangelistic labours. Oh, that Christians at home would go and do likewise—go everywhere, in streets, and lanes, and villages preaching the Word, and the Lord would certainly be with them, and his power be present to heal.”

When about a year after his arrival the missionary was able himself to preach in the Chinese language, the evangelistic work went on still more vigorously. From the wise and judicious director, he became now the energetic leader of the company of preachers, traversing in every direction the whole region round Amoy, till there was scarcely one important centre of population on either side of the Chang-chow estuary in which the joyful sound had not been heard. Old stations flourished, and new fields opened up, which seemed scarcely less ripe for the harvest. Seldom did a month pass in which there were not in some of the churches inquirers to be instructed, and converts to be baptized; while the old members, for the most part, visibly grew in faith, in knowledge, and in Christian activity and zeal. A numerous “school of the prophets,” too, for the training of native evangelists and teachers, flourished under the missionary’s own care, at the central

station at Amoy, and held out the prospect of still more active and extensive operations in the time to come.

It was indeed a green spot, which attracted the eye even of the passing traveller, as a "field which the Lord had blessed." An interesting testimony of this kind, which came unsought from an unexpected quarter, I cannot help quoting. A writer in the *Overland Chinese Mail*, who signs himself "Ornithologicus," had set out with a fellow sportsman from Amoy towards some point on the mainland. Their boat was capsized by a squall, and they were taken up by a junk which was bearing towards the mouth of the Pechuia river. The boatmen would not return with them to Amoy; but showed them much kindness, taking off their own garments, and insisting upon them putting them on, to prevent their getting chilled. The rest must be told in the writer's own words:—

"Running with a fair breeze, in the course of an hour or so we reached Pechuia, and were led by the boatmen, amidst the cheers of the small boys, to the missionary chapel. Our guides conducted us through the Chinese chapel, up a ladder to a room above, where a teacher was instructing a class of boys. The learned man, when he first saw us in our dirty dress, and a mob crushing in at our heels, felt annoyed; but as soon as he heard that we were peaceful inhabitants of Amoy, who had met with an accident while on a boat trip, his countenance immediately assumed a bland expression, and he invited us into his room, and made us recount to him as well as we could our accident, while he sent to have our clothes dried. Several converts came to have a look at us, and amongst them an old respectable-looking man, who was somewhat deaf; and when the rest explained to him what had occurred, he turned to us and said, in a serious tone, 'You ought indeed to be thankful to the Almighty for having spared you from a watery grave!' After we had chatted some time with our visitors, we were shown into a small private room, with a table, a couch, and a couple of bamboo chairs. This we were told was the missionary's private apartment whilst he taught amongst them. On the table was laid a dinner, half Chinese and half English, and we were left alone to dress and enjoy our meal. Our long subjection to moistening influences had given us extraordinary appetites, and we did our duty well to the good things set before us. Before it grew dark we expressed a desire to go for a walk, and were led through the village to a secluded path by the river's side. The streets have not much to recommend them, but the country was green and pretty, and quite a pleasant change from the barren hills of Amoy.

"On our return to the missionary dwelling, we had a cup of tea, and then a gong was beaten, and some of the converts came in to ask us if we would attend evening worship. We of course implied a willing assent, and stepping into the hall, found a company of about twenty gathered round a table with books before them; two seats were left vacant for us at the bottom of the table, which we took possession of. The teacher at the head of the table began the service by giving out a hymn, which was sung by the company under his precentorship. The Bible was then opened, and each one read a verse of the chapter in his turn; an explication of the chapter followed, after which all fell on their knees while the good man prayed. My knowledge of the local dialect is not very great, but I knew enough to understand that he returned thanks for our deliverance from

a watery death, and also that he prayed for the safe passage of their pastor, who had left them for a visit to the north.<sup>1</sup> We were exceedingly pleased with all we witnessed, and came to the conclusion that the only answer we could in future return to the cavillers at the progress of Christianity in China would be that we only wished that half the Christian assemblies we have been present at at home could evince a portion of the sincere and true devotion in worship of the small body of converts in Pechuia. What the heart is, it is impossible for man to know, unless he judges from the external demeanour.

“As soon as the service was over we retired to our small room, and being very anxious to return to Amoy, we inquired whether we could not hire a boat to take us back. The owner of a boat was summoned, and he agreed to start as soon as the tide turned, which would not be till midnight.

“We talked with the people that came to see us, and smoked incessantly to pass the time away. Midnight seemed a long time approaching; at last, to our intense relief, we were told that the boat was ready, and were lighted through the streets to the river side, many of our friends following to take leave of us as we embarked.”

But this bright picture had also its darker shadow. “It is impossible but that offences shall come.” Tares will ever mingle with the wheat even in the richest and fairest fields of the Church, and the infant churches of Fokien were no exceptions to this universal rule. The mother congregation at Pechuia, in particular, had become latterly the subject of grave solicitude to the missionaries. Dissensions had arisen about the building of a chapel; one or two cases of scandal had occurred amongst the members; death and change had of late visibly thinned the ranks of the little society, while few new disciples were rising up to fill the vacant places. It seemed indeed as if the fresh spirit of life, under which at first they had grown exceedingly, at once in numbers and in fervour, had passed away, and that the work had become stationary, or even retrograde. It was in these circumstances that Mr. Burns had been urged by his brother missionary to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours, and to bear his share of the increasing anxieties and responsibility of their common work.

On his arrival at Pechuia he found the evils of which he had heard less serious than he had feared, but still sufficiently grave to call for prompt and vigorous corrective measures. On Feb. 22d, 1859, he writes from Amoy:—“There are two persons there who have fallen away from their Christian profession; but neither of them had from the beginning, as far as I learn, any marked evidence of a work of grace. The only really melancholy case that I know of, is one who was chapel-keeper, and afterwards a preacher, but who, there is reason to fear, has again fallen under the power of opium-smoking.” The general aspect of affairs, however, as it presented itself to him after so long an absence, was on the whole most cheering. “I wonder,” says he, “more than ever I did at the reality and preciousness of the work of the di-

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Mr. Douglas, then on a visit at Shanghai.

vine Spirit at Pechuia and the neighbouring stations. May the time be near when new and like glorious manifestations of the Lord's saving power shall be witnessed in this and in all lands! . . . Yesterday we had about forty of the converts in this neighbourhood assembled at the communion at Pechuia; and today, in coming here, fully a dozen accompanied me, most of them returning home. It was a sweet contrast with the state of things five years ago, when we first visited Pechuia, and when in this whole neighbourhood there was probably not a single follower of the Lamb. 'These, where had they been?' These from the land of Sinim! Oh! glorious day, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be converted unto Emmanuel; when all nations shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call him blessed! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Take unto thee thy great power and reign."

Two of the offending members were, after all gentler means of remedy had been tried in vain, cut off from communion, while two others were subjected to the faithful but loving discipline of the Church, with a view to their repentance and restoration. Remedial measures, too, of a more permanent kind were at the same time adopted. A regular body of office-bearers, according to the Presbyterian model, was constituted at Pechuia, as had been already done at Amoy and Chioh-bey; the whole proceedings of the election being conducted in a most orderly manner, in an assembly of the native church itself. Another measure not less memorable originated with the native brethren themselves, and is in its whole circumstances and history deeply touching. "A fortnight ago," writes Mr. Burns, "at the instance of one of the elders at Chioh-bey (who is one of the Pechuia converts, and was one of the chief founders, as he is one of the pillars of the Chioh-bey church), the Pechuia, in concert with the Chioh-bey church, observed a season of solemn prayer and fasting, that they might seek the return of the Lord's favour to Pechuia. I was at Chioh-bey when this season was observed—Tuesday, the 16th of August. There was a large attendance of church members, *and when the elder I have alluded to, I-ju, began to pray, he was so affected that he could hardly proceed.* The preacher at Chioh-bey, Tow-lo, who began his work as a preacher at Pechuia in 1854, *was also sobbing aloud.* It was evident that the Lord was in the midst of us."

It is not strange surely that such offences should be found in the infant churches in heathen lands, as are never wanting in the purest and holiest flocks in Christendom. "It is well," said Dr. Hamilton, in his report of this year, "to bear in remembrance the many difficulties to which converts in such a country are subjected, from past habits and surrounding influences. Weak in faith and experience, they are as sheep in the midst of wolves. In our intercessions let us not forget those churches, which, like the lily amongst thorns, are planted in the heart of heathendom." They themselves had long since said, in that touching letter to their absent pastor and father in

the faith:—"You know that our faith is weak and in danger. . . . We have heard the gospel but a few months; our faith is not yet firm. . . . We are like sheep that have lost their shepherd, or an infant that has lost its milk."

The evils which had been thus the cause of such bitter sorrow to all, were yet in the end overruled for good. The little church came forth from the ordeal purified, braced, and strengthened; with numbers somewhat reduced, but with a deeper and humbler faith, and with a tried and disciplined steadfastness. The shaking of the tree had only fastened the roots the more. The barren branches had been taken away, and the fruitful "purged," that they might bring forth more fruit. "During these months," says one of the missionaries, "a singular blessing has rested on efforts made to remove the evils which were pressing upon us. . . . Fact after fact has come to light, manifesting those who were not approved, and most unexpected light has been thrown on what, if undiscovered, would have continued to infest the Church, and hinder the work amongst us."<sup>2</sup>

Another event of the deepest interest occurred this year, which is so strikingly illustrative of the whole character of the mission, and of the infant churches to which it has given birth, that I shall relate the circumstances at length in the words of one of the missionaries. "Last month," says Mr. Douglas, "a step in advance was taken by the Amoy church, which seems to me most important, and the most cheering which has been taken since that church was organized. It was the setting apart of two native evangelists, *entirely supported by the native church in Amoy*, under the care of the American missionaries.

"The novelty and cheering interest of this step does not lie in the use of native evangelists. These have long been employed, and found quite indispensable in the instruction and extension of the Church. But the singular interest of what has just been begun is, that these two native evangelists are as completely independent of foreign money, as the ministers of Canada or Australia. Of course the church itself is still dependent for instruction on the foreign missionaries, and on agents paid by them; but in the case of these two new evangelists, a beginning has been made of the self-supporting principle.

"It was after abundant prayer and careful counting of the cost, that this work was begun. The choice of the two brethren honoured by the Master to undertake this office was quite independent of the missionaries, the names being only submitted for approval or rejection after the choice, before the setting apart. On that day the native members of the other church at Amoy, that, namely, under the care of the London Missionary Society, were invited to be present. Almost all the missionaries of the several societies were there.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Mr. Grant, 8th Oct., 1859.

And already both that church and the younger churches on the mainland are considering whether they be able to follow the example so well set to them.

“The field chosen for these new labourers is the un-evangelized portion of the island of Amoy, which is just the whole island (about thirty miles in circumference), except the town itself. How wonderful and glorious the ways of God! While he is opening up our way to the towns and cities at a greater distance around, he is taking care that the populous villages of the immediate neighbourhood be not neglected.”

Amid these interesting and fruitful pastoral cares, the more extended and aggressive work of the mission went on vigorously—the missionaries “using the ‘Gospel Boat’ as their home in going from place to place in evangelistic work, for which the rivers of China afford so great facility.” Another attempt was made to effect a permanent lodgement within the walls of the great city of Chang-chow, but was for the time defeated in consequence of a singular incident. “A week ago,” writes Mr. Burns, “we were living near the district magistrate’s office. He had gone out about midnight, on Sabbath the 13th, to inspect the streets, and just as he was passing our lodging, one of the assistants, when the other had gone to rest, suddenly, in the fulness of his heart, began aloud to sing a Christian hymn. The unusual sound attracted the mandarin; he listened, and hearing that a foreigner was there, he next day sent to ask us to leave the city.” In another direction, however, some hopeful tokens had begun to appear in places to which Mr. Douglas’ eye had been long and anxiously turned. At Anhai, a town of about 30,000 or 40,000 inhabitants, situated at the head of a long inlet, about thirty-five miles north-east from Amoy, an opening had been found for the truth, which soon led to the establishment of a regular mission station, and to the foundation of one of the most numerous and fruitful of the Chinese native churches.

It was in the midst of these interesting and congenial labours that Mr. Burns received the following touching lines from his early friend, James Hamilton, which I am tempted to insert as a fragrant memorial both of the writer himself and of that gracious and benignant friend whose character he embalms:—

“48 *Euston Square, London, N. W., May 10th, 1859.*—My DEAR FRIEND,—Two hours ago I received a notification of what will doubtless be communicated to you in fuller detail from home—the entrance into his everlasting rest of your beloved father, on the morning of Sabbath last. It was only a few weeks after his retirement from his ministerial work; so that the heavenly Sabbath has followed sooner than he hoped. It has been a wonderfully serene and blameless life, and in the remarkable visitation of his people twenty years ago he has been a rarely happy minister. The announcement has sent my own thoughts back to Kilsyth and Strathblane, and to incidents that transpired ‘full many years ago.’ To you in your far place of sojourn the tidings will be

very affecting. It is touching to think that you will see his face no more; but oh! how blessed is his own case, who now sees Jesus face to face, and who from a life of prayer has passed to one of praise.

“Last January I saw him and your dear mother in Glasgow; they had come in to attend the meeting on behalf of China in Free St. Matthew’s (Dr. S. Miller’s). Your father seemed to me very much the same as ever. He sat on a chair which was placed for him beside the pulpit, and the congregation evidently eyed him with much reverence and affection.

“‘The fathers, where are they?’ I often feel it solemn now to know that we are getting into the fore-front; no generation any longer between ourselves and the great reckoning.

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“With love to all the brethren, I remain, affectionately,  
yours,  
JAMES HAMILTON.”

In October, 1859, Mr. Burns was again on his way towards a new and distant sphere of labour. The special service for which he had come to Fokien, and for which the peculiar relation in which he stood to the inland churches there gave him a special advantage, had been satisfactorily accomplished, and now he longed to return to his old work of pioneering the way of other labourers in regions where the gospel had not yet found an entrance. The nearest and most natural centre of operations was Fuh-chow—the capital city of the province to which Amoy belongs, and here accordingly he spent most of the next year—quickly acquiring the new dialect, preparing a hymn-book for the use of the infant church, and unweariedly sowing, as usual, the gospel-seed. Of these labours the following notices have been kindly furnished to me by esteemed brethren connected with other sections of the Christian Church.

“When Mr. Burns,” says the Rev. C. Hartwell, one of the oldest missionaries of the American Board at Fuh-chow, “first came to Fuh-chow in October, 1859, he divided his labours between preaching in English and studying and preaching in Chinese. He spent his Sabbaths at the ‘Pagoda Anchorage,’<sup>3</sup> preaching on ship-board to seamen and others who came to his services. The week-days he spent at Fuh-chow, studying the spoken dialect, and for a short time preaching two evenings in a week in the Amoy dialect, to the tin-foil beaters and others from the Amoy region living here, who were induced by special invitation to attend his services in our church.

“Of his labours at the ‘Anchorage,’ I frequently heard him speak, as he made his home with me for the first two months of his stay here. A few

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<sup>3</sup> “Pagoda Anchorage” is the place where large ships lie, about twelve miles below the city; it is so called from a pagoda on “Pagoda Island.”

Scotch ship-masters also called on him at my house, but I remember no facts of especial interest connected with his labours among the shipping.

“As his congregations of hearers in the Amoy dialect soon became small, he ceased from his efforts in that direction, and devoted himself exclusively to learning the Fuh-chow language, and labouring for the Fuh-chow people. Having an accurate knowledge of the written language,<sup>4</sup> and a great facility in acquiring the spoken dialects, he was soon able to do something in connection with the native helpers employed by the Mission of the American Board, and the American Methodist Mission.

“Besides attending the services of other missionaries, he himself held others in our churches, in which at first the native helpers did the preaching, he simply directing the exercises, and occasionally suggesting points to them upon which he wished them to speak. He was quite successful in this mode of effort, and the helpers as well as others were benefited by the meetings.

“As his ability to use the local dialect increased, he gradually did more preaching himself at his services. His labours at first were mostly at Nan-tai,<sup>5</sup> where churches had been built and good accommodations for preaching secured. Afterwards, as the missionaries within the city, from want of chapels, at that time were forced to labour a good deal in the streets, he began to accompany them in their labours in street-preaching, and also engaged in such efforts himself in connection with native assistants.

“He also assisted us by visiting some of our out-stations in the country, and labouring in these places. One of our present out-stations was commenced by him. We had opened a chapel some miles back of the place in a smaller village, but had been unable to secure one in this large village until his effort was successful. He laboured at this place for some time, and several persons manifested some interest in the truth, but none of them have yet given evidence of piety. When he left Fuh-chow the last time, he gave funds to employ an extra helper for this village for some time, and the out-station has been fully manned by us ever since; but, for unknown reasons, it has hitherto proved our least successful field of labour.

“Not desiring to open a new mission at Fuh-chow, during his stay here, Mr. Burns sought to aid each of the three missions already established, as opportunity offered and occasion seemed to require. He did not confine his

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<sup>4</sup> “The written language” may perhaps not give a clear idea; what is meant is the *literary style*, in which books are composed, and which is equally current through the whole empire; of course it is quite different from the colloquial of any place, and only well-educated persons can understand it

<sup>5</sup> Nan-tai, the suburb of Fuh-chow, on the river, where all the foreign hong and mercantile and consular residences stand. The mission houses, and some of the mission chapels of the *American Methodist Mission*, are also there. The city proper (the walled part) lies about three miles north of the river, the suburb stretching the whole way, though most dense on the river side.

assistance to any one of them. He sought for openings where he could be useful in promoting the work generally, and in this he was very successful. His catholicity of feeling made him ever ready to aid at any weak point

“The particulars in which, as it seems to me, he most aided our mission—and in fact the others also—were his excellent influence upon our native assistants, and in successfully introducing the use of colloquial hymns among us in our worship.

“Our helpers soon learned to feel a great regard for Mr. Burns, and their piety was quickened and deepened apparently through his influence. His power over them arose from his own deep piety; his accurate knowledge of the Chinese language; the great fund of Christian knowledge at his command; and the singleness of purpose which he ever manifested. We felt it to be a privilege to have our native preachers under his influence and instruction.

“Previous to his coming among us all our hymns used in worship had been in the written language, as had been the case elsewhere generally in China. His attempt, though not the only one, was the first which was successful in introducing the use of colloquial hymns for this purpose. With the aid of native preachers he prepared some of the hymns used at Amoy and Swatow, in the spoken dialect of Fuh-chow. These he first printed in sheet form, and used them in street-preaching and chapel-preaching, till he was convinced that they were in a good colloquial style, and then he published them as amended in a book form, and they soon came into general use among us. He showed his usual enthusiasm in introducing his hymns, and the force of his character had much weight in overcoming the prejudices of our better educated Christians to the general use of colloquial hymns. Our hymn-book has been much enlarged, but the hymns prepared by Mr. Burns are still general favourites. His influence for good here, doubtless, will be perpetuated for a long time to come through the use of these hymns.

“I think of nothing else that would be of especial interest to mention. He was a good man, did good wherever he was, and has gone to his reward. The savour of his name is still fragrant at Fuh-chow.”

“He came to Fuh-chow,” writes the Rev. Dr. M’Lay, of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, “shortly after we had gathered in the first-fruits of the harvest in this field, and the effect of his example and his teachings on the native Christians was most salutary. He was eminently a man of prayer, and this feature of his character, as also his love for God’s Word, operated beneficially on the native church. His thorough consecration to the work of an evangelist, and his steady perseverance in it, produced a powerful impression upon all with whom he came in contact. He was also very useful in training the native churches in the use of holy song; and the hymns prepared under his direction are still found in the hymnbooks used by the

native churches of this city and its vicinity. There were not many converts added to the societies under the care of our mission during the time Mr. Burns was in Fuh-chow. *It would appear that he aimed chiefly at the edification of the native church*, and in this department he did a good work. The memory of Mr. Burns is very tenderly cherished by those who became acquainted with him during his residence in Fuh-chow, and among all the native Christians his name is as ointment poured forth.”

In September of the next year (1860) he returned to the neighbourhood of Amoy, in consequence of some trying circumstances to which we shall have presently to refer in greater detail; and then, after only a brief stay, passed on to his old home at Swatow, where he found to his joy that the wilderness which he had left so short a time before had begun in a remarkable manner to blossom, under the able and devoted labours of his successor, Mr. Smith. The day after his arrival he preached to the natives, and the change for the better that had come over the people in their desire to hear the gospel since his first visit, five years previously, affected him almost to tears on the occasion. Here also he compiled a hymn-book in the colloquial dialect, which proved a precious boon to the young converts.<sup>6</sup>

He returned to Fuh-chow in the course of the next year, and continued his labours there for some months longer. But, meanwhile, events had occurred in the neighbourhood of Amoy which required his presence there for a more lengthened period, and which ultimately led to his removal to the capital city of Peking.

Allusion has already been made more than once to the fiery trial to which these infant churches have been almost continually exposed through the bitter opposition and hostility of their heathen fellow-countrymen. The political jealousy of the ruling class, and the religious rancour of the people, united in common antipathy to the professors of a strange and alien faith. The mandarins suspected the foreign creed; the multitude hated the singular and exclusive worship. To the philosophic Confucian they were obnoxious as fanatics; to the superstitious devotee as enemies of the gods and despisers of the ancestral rites. Hence a general and constant sentiment of mingled suspicion, dislike, and fear, which was ever in danger, on the least provocation, of breaking out into open acts of hostility and lawless violence. They were seldom, indeed, called to witness for their divine Master unto blood; never, perhaps, except when some terrible misconception might involve the Christian evangelist in supposed complicity with the schemes of traitors and rebels; but short of this there was scarcely any extreme of hardship and suffering to which they might not be subjected. Their houses were spoiled. Their property was destroyed. Their rice-fields were laid waste. Their cattle were

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<sup>6</sup> *Narrative, &c.*, p. 60.

driven away. Their pine-trees were cut down. They were refused the use of the public wells. Their supply of labourers was cut off by hostile combination in time of harvest. Their places of worship were rudely assailed, and their sacred assemblies interrupted, without hope of protection or redress from any native authority. One or two instances of this petty but vexatious persecution may be given from the letters of the missionaries. Thus one of the members of the Bay-pay church, of the name of Wat, had been called upon to pay the accustomed tribute in support of the idolatrous ceremonies at one of the great feasts. He refused. Forthwith he was denied water from the public well, and his son was beaten in attempting to fetch it. Then they cut down a large number of his pine-trees, which formed a considerable portion of his property; and as he appealed for redress in vain, they proceeded next to cut down his fruit-trees. Other members of the same church had their rice-fields and other property plundered, and at one time three of the female candidates for baptism were severely beaten by their relatives. At Yam-tsai, in the Swatow district, one poor widow had her house plundered on the Lord's-day when she was at church; another member had his field of sugarcane destroyed; a third had his fowls stolen; and all were constantly exposed to the scoffs and reproaches of their fellow-villagers, and the unbelieving members of their own families. Sometimes the malicious designs of the adversary were defeated in singular ways, or signally overruled for good. One day the police entered the premises of the old cloth merchant at Pechuia, intending to plunder or perhaps to seize him. Being rather deaf, he did not hear their demand, but he said, "O yes; I know what you have come for," and taking down some of his goods, and pointing to the rest, he said, "Take them, take them all, and I'll go with you, too; but I am old and rather deaf; take my boys, too, and my little girl there. We are all Christians, we are not afraid; we will go with you." The men, astonished at this novel reception, left the premises without injuring any of the inmates, or touching an article of their property. While one was thus preserved by his own simple and unworldly faith, another was succoured by the brotherly love of his fellow-disciples. An old farmer, who resided about five miles from Khi-boey, a village, in the same district, having become a Christian, his heathen neighbours evinced their bitter dislike by refusing at harvest time to give him the least assistance in reaping his rice-fields. On hearing of the old man's trouble, the brethren at Khi-boey at once resolved to go to his help; a band of them started one evening for the farm, and commencing operations early next morning, they worked so heartily that the fields were all reaped in one day, to the surprise of the neighbours, and to the comfort and relief of their brother in distress. Such trials as these had fallen of late with peculiar severity on some of the village churches in the Pechuia district, and called for some vigorous intervention in their behalf on the part of their spiritual overseers. The case

of Bay-pay has been already incidentally alluded to. More recently at Khi-boey, a village about twenty miles to the south-west of Pechuia, where an interesting and prosperous church had been recently established, the disciples had been called to pass, while yet, as it were, in their very infancy, through a great fight of affliction. "On hearing of the disturbances, Mr. Swanson at once repaired to Khi-boey, and was gratified to find that though the persecution still raged, the converts were keeping firm and hopeful, and that fourteen of them were in a state of preparedness for baptism. No house could be had for divine service, and they had to gather under the shade of a magnificent lung-yen tree. The persecution ceased for a time, but the missionaries were soon again summoned to interpose in their behalf. Chioh, in whose house the Christians had been in the habit of assembling, was driven from his home, and on his attempting to take refuge in the house of another Christian, the roof was broken in by a mob, and Chioh prevented from entering. His widowed sister was then attacked, and her son threatened with death unless they complied with their demand for money; a sword was brandished over the lad's head, while they required that he should cease to worship God. This he resolutely refused, declaring himself ready to die rather than renounce his faith. Chioh and another went down to Amoy for advice, and Mr. Burns at once returned with them to see what could be done. While he was attempting to pacify the enraged villagers, one of the converts was set upon by a number of men armed with bludgeons and pikes, and severely beaten, and might have been killed, but for his timely intervention."

No one assuredly was ever in a better position to interfere in such a case than one who for so many years, and amid all his wanderings amongst this heathen people, had so simply and wholly cast himself on the care of his divine Master, and had never in any single instance invoked the succour of the secular arm in his own defence. The rights which he had never sought to enforce in his own behalf he could the more boldly and freely, and with the greater effect, plead in behalf of others. Ever ready himself to suffer, he was prompt to hold his protecting shield over those who were less able to suffer than he. He spoke accordingly in their behalf with a resolute force and decision which, in dealing with secular matters, was not usual with him. A formal representation was made to the Chinese authorities, through the British consul, who himself took up the case very cordially, and threatened that, if immediate justice were not done, he would report the case to Peking. This produced the desired result. It was promised that the stolen property should be restored, and money given in compensation for property destroyed. But the Christians, before consenting to this offer, preferred consulting Mr. Burns at Amoy, who at once came again to their aid, and obtained from the magistrates the following terms:—

- (1.) Restoration, so far as possible, of the very articles stolen;

(2.) A bond from the enemies to guarantee their non-interference with the Christians; and

(3.) A proclamation to be issued, exhorting the people not to interfere with the Christians.

“Most happily all this was agreed to, and the enemies seeing the turn matters were taking, and fearing the violence of their own authorities, prayed for the interposition of the missionaries in their behalf. Mr. Burns gladly used his influence accordingly, and thus all ended well. The stolen property was restored in presence of the mandarins, Mr. Burns, and an immense concourse of people. The poor Christians carried their pigs, and led back their oxen to the homes from which they had so lately been driven, rejoicing, and yet we hope humble. On the same day the enemies entered into a bond not to interfere with those who were, or might become Christians, and not to annoy them in any way. In a few days after, the mandarins issued a proclamation, intimating that the case was now settled, and strictly forbidding all persons from interfering with anyone ‘who may enter the holy religion of Jesus.’ Not the least remarkable feature in the termination of these disturbances was, that the enemies looked upon the missionaries as their best friends, for having shielded them from the severity of the mandarins.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus for once, and in behalf of Christ’s “little ones,” had “the Man of the Book” sustained the character of the vigorous, sagacious, and successful diplomatist. The storm for the present passed away. Then for a season had the churches rest throughout the towns and villages of Fokien. But the permanent relations of the native Christians towards their heathen countrymen were still in a very uncertain and precarious state, and it was thought important that Mr. Burns should proceed to Peking, with the view of obtaining a personal interview with Sir Frederick Bruce, and thus, if possible, effecting a more secure and satisfactory settlement. He left Amoy accordingly, and arrived at the capital, in October, 1863, thus entering on the last period of his missionary career.

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<sup>7</sup> *Narrative, &c.*, p. 40, 41.